

A new antwren (*Myrmotherula*) from southeastern Brazil

by Luiz Pedreira Gonzaga

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In 1982, while banding birds in a partially isolated and very disturbed woodlot located in the foothills of Serra dos Órgãos, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, I mist-netted an antwren which I could not immediately refer to any of the species of *Myrmotherula* known to occur in southeastern Brazil (*M. gularis*, *M. axillaris*, *M. minor*, *M. unicolor* and *M. urosticta*—Meyer de Schauensee 1966, Pinto 1978). Two of these, *M. axillaris* and *M. unicolor*, were known to live in the area, having been regularly observed and captured in the course of my previous work there, 1975–1982 (Gonzaga 1986). As I suspected it of being an undescribed bird, I prepared the specimen as a skin. Comparisons made of this specimen with material of the genus in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), the British Museum (Natural History) (BMNH), the Cambridge University Museum of Zoology (CUMZ), the Museu Nacional do Rio de Janeiro (MNRJ), the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (MPEG), the Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo (MZSP) and the National Museum of Natural History (USNM), and discussions held with colleagues who examined the specimen, have led me to confirm my initial suspicion and to describe the bird as a representative of a new species, as follows:

Rio de Janeiro Antwren ***Myrmotherula fluminensis*** sp. nov.

Holotype. Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi No. 40786. Inactive adult male (gonads 1 mm, skull ossified) from 4 km southeast of Santo Aleixo, Majé, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (22°34'45"S, 43°01'39"W), elevation c. 20 m; collected 4 Jul 1982 by L. P. Gonzaga.

Distribution. Known only from the type locality.

Description of Holotype. Upperparts, including upper tail coverts, sides of breast, flanks and under tail-coverts bluish-grey. Chin, throat, malar region, breast and belly black, shading grey on lower belly. Eye ring and subocular stripe white. Ear coverts grey, whitish basally, forming a light auricular spot immediately above the black of the throat. Under wing-coverts and axillaries white. Wing-coverts black, broadly tipped with white. Flight feathers grey, outer primaries narrowly edged white. Inner primaries with white margins on inner webs. Outer edges of all flight feathers except outer primaries edged bluish-grey. Tail grey, outer edges of feathers paler. Soft part colours: iris brown; bill blackish-brown with ivory tomia; tongue and gape orange; feet pale bluish-grey, soles yellowish.

Measurements of Holotype (mm). Wing (flat) 53; tail 40 (outer rectrices 10 mm shorter than the central pair, and 5 mm shorter than the adjacent pair); culmen exposed 14, from anterior edge of nostril 9; tarsus 16.5; total length 117. Weight 9 g. Wing formula: p6 is the longest primary, p5 and

TABLE 1

Measurements (mm) of *Myrmotherula fluminensis* sp. nov. (♂) and *Myrmotherula iheringi* (♂♂) compared

Specimen	Wing (flat)	Tail	Tarsus	Exposed culmen
<i>M. fluminensis</i>				
Holotype	53	40	16.5	14
<i>M. iheringi</i>				
AMNH 127604	51	29	13.0	13
AMNH 286524	50	27	15.0	13
AMNH 490590	52	28	15.0	13
AMNH 824069	53	31	15.5	14
BMNH 1914.4.25.10	50	28	14.5	11
MNRJ 17470	51	28	15.0	12
MNRJ 17472	50	29	15.0	—
MPEG 5169	51	27	15.0	13
MPEG 24609	51	30	16.0	12
MZSP 58726	51	28	15.0	12
USNM 313724	49	28	—	12

p7 very slightly shorter; p8 2.5 mm shorter than p7, p9 5 mm shorter than p8, p10 10 mm shorter than p9; p 1-5 of nearly equal length.

Etymology. From Latin *flumen*, river; referring to the state of Rio de Janeiro, where the holotype was collected.

Diagnosis. The holotype shows a combination of characters (lack of white on flanks and tail, white under wing-coverts and black on the throat extending laterally up to the malar region) found in males of only one other species of the genus, *Myrmotherula iheringi* (see Meyer de Schauensee 1982). This latter species was described by Sneath (1914) after having herself (Sneath 1908, 1912) referred specimens of *M. iheringi* to *M. garbei*, from which, however, the males of *M. iheringi* clearly differ by having white (instead of grey) under wing-coverts. *M. garbei* has been treated as a subspecies of *M. longipennis* (e.g. Pinto 1978). From the male of *M. iheringi*, in turn, the holotype of *M. fluminensis* differs in having a much longer and more graduated tail, a slenderer bill, a clear bluish cast in the plumage, and a larger extension of black on the abdomen. Recently the first Peruvian specimen of *M. iheringi* (as assigned on the label) was collected by J. W. Fitzpatrick in Manu National Park and deposited in the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH 824069). Apart from differences in size (tail; see Table 1) and coloration (extension of black on the abdomen), the Peruvian specimen is remarkably similar to the holotype of *M. fluminensis* and correspondingly different from all other specimens of *M. iheringi* examined. J. W. Fitzpatrick (*in litt.* 1986) comments that it would be surprising if Peruvian "*iheringi*" (of which he has since collected more specimens) turned out to be undescribed, "but it is by no means impossible, since the taxonomy of this confusing group still needs to be clarified". Graduation of the tail is found also in some specimens of *M. iheringi* (e.g. AMNH 127604 and 824069) and possibly of other species in this group. The presence of variable amounts of white on the face (auriculars and eye-ring) can be found in specimens of several species (e.g. *M. iheringi* MPEG 5169, *M. unicolor* AMNH 314549, *M. longipennis* MPEG 24602) and,

although particularly conspicuous in the holotype of *M. fluminensis*, may be a general trend in the group rather than a diagnostic character. Finally it must be stressed that males of *M. axillaris* from southeastern Brazil (*M. a. luctuosa*) have a tendency to reduction of white on the flanks (e.g. specimens collected by E. Kaempfer in Bahia and Espírito Santo, AMNH) when compared to the males of all other subspecies. However, even in those specimens the presence of grey mixed with black in the malar region and on the underparts, as well as the presence of white on the tips of the rectrices, are constant. Furthermore, the presence of white on the flanks and tail of individuals of *M. axillaris* is locally constant in the population from Majé (the type-locality of *M. fluminensis*) and seemingly also in the entire state of Rio de Janeiro, which is the southern limit of distribution of the species.

Additional remarks. Most of the species of *Myrmotherula* ever recorded in eastern Brazil are rather local and at best uncommon, if not actually rare. This is the case for *M. minor* and *M. unicolor*; *M. urosticta*, though relatively common, is even more restricted in range, both latitudinal and altitudinal, than those 2 species (cf. Pinto 1978, Teixeira & Gonzaga 1985; see also Scott & Brooke 1985, Willis & Oniki 1981). Another species which has been placed in this genus, *M. erythronotos* (Meyer de Schauensee 1966, Pinto 1978), was known only from specimens collected in the nineteenth century around one locality (King 1978–1979, Sick & Teixeira 1979, Scott & Brooke 1985) until its rediscovery in September 1987 in another place (Pacheco in press.). The general appearance, behaviour and voice of *M. erythronotos* suggest it is better placed in the genus *Formicivora* (J. F. Pacheco). The 2 commonest species of *Myrmotherula* in eastern Brazil are *M. gularis*, endemic to this region like the preceding 2 (although the status of Amazonian *M. minor* needs to be better ascertained—T. A. Parker *in litt.* 1986), and *M. axillaris*, undoubtedly the most widespread of all (pers. obs. and Scott & Brooke 1985). *M. axillaris*, like *M. minor*, *M. unicolor* and *M. urosticta*, seems to be largely restricted to lower elevations (up to 500 m), while *M. gularis* has been recorded from 300 m up to 1200 m (Scott & Brooke 1985; see also Willis & Oniki 1981).

The late discovery of this male of *M. fluminensis*, after 7 years of research in the area (Gonzaga 1986), suggests that this bird may have been a straggler from the nearby slopes of the Serra dos Órgãos, though whatever the population present there it must be local and very small. However, as in other similar cases in the past, one cannot easily dismiss the possibility of the unique specimen of *M. fluminensis* being a hybrid, e.g. *M. axillaris* × *M. unicolor*, although hybrids in this group must be rare, having never been reported among the Formicariidae. It seems equally conceivable, but probably easier to prove, that the holotype of *M. fluminensis*, instead of being a rarity, is simply a representative of an overlooked population, of which sight records may have been referred to grey-flanked 'typical' males of *M. a. luctuosa*. To discover additional individuals of such an overlooked population is therefore a major challenge to observers and collectors who have the opportunity to work in the foothills and lower-elevation forests of the Serra dos Órgãos or maybe elsewhere in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

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A new name for the eastern subspecies of the Brown-backed Solitaire *Myadestes* *occidentalis*

by H. Douglas Pratt

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The Hawaiian thrushes were long classified in an endemic genus *Phaeornis*. Pratt ('Relationships and speciation of the Hawaiian thrushes': 1982, *Living Bird* 19: 73-90) showed that these birds were very similar in